

THE GREATEST GIFT IN TIME OR ETERNITY

NO. 2534

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 1897
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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*“Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.
Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not,
and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God,
and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.
Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.”
Isaiah 55:4-6*

WE are met together with two objects. First, there is the preacher's object, that is, to set forth and to proclaim the blessings of the covenant of grace. It is my duty and it is my delight to stand here and cry, “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”

Then, there is the object of the hearers, oh, that everyone here were heartily in pursuit of it! Nay, what is even better, I would that everyone here might attain this object, for it is that you may feed upon the blessed covenant provisions mentioned in our text. If there be water, my brethren, let us drink it. If there be wine and milk, let us be satisfied therewith. Let us pray that every soul in this place may even now delight itself in fatness.

You who have already partaken of the provisions of the covenant, receive them again. Come once more to the table which the Lord's grace has so richly spread. You have a daily hunger, let that hunger be again appeased. Your appetite grows if you are in good spiritual health. Come, then, and let the appetite be again satisfied. If you do, it will grow again, and again you will want still more of the same heavenly food, for you will still hunger—blessedly hunger—after the royal dainties which the Lord has so bountifully provided for you.

And oh, that some here, who have never feasted on the luxuries of true godliness, might get a taste of them while I am talking about them! It is my design to speak very plainly—not to try to say anything of my own, but just to set forth the Master's words, explaining them and making them as clear as I can, that all who run may read, and yet speaking of them so earnestly that those who read may straightway run.

Why do we come to our places of worship? What is the object of our Sunday gatherings? Surely not merely to hear a man talk and then to go away and ourselves talk about that talk. But this is a place of heavenly business where something real is to be done, where men are to be lifted into a higher life, and where those who as yet have not been quickened may come and receive that life. I pray that some may receive it this very hour.

Time is flying. Death is near. Eternity is close at hand. It is time that we should be in earnest about these things if we have trifled hitherto. It is time that we should come to a right and wise decision, and partake of what God has so graciously provided.

Without any further preface, I bid you notice that the three verses of my text speak of *a divine gift, a divine promise, and a divine exhortation*. These will be the three divisions of my subject.

I. First, here is A DIVINE GIFT, “Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.”

We are not now talking about payments or about deservings, the Gospel and all that it brings must be regarded as a gift. Men rightly say that there is nothing freer than a gift, and truly, there is nothing freer than the free gift of God. What is that divine gift of which our text speaks?

Well, first, the *Father has given His Son*. The words I have just spoken are very simple, but there is an infinite meaning in them. So great is sin, so tremendous is evil as to be unfathomable. So great is the ruin which sin has brought upon us that it is truly indescribable. And equally great, yea, even greater is the remedy for the evil. He who made all things and who fills all things, willed not that we should perish, and therefore He must give a redemption price to ransom us out of bondage. He must provide a sacrifice to take away our guilt and to do this, He gave His Son.

He had but one, His Well-beloved, equal with Himself, and one with Himself in all things. Yet He gave us His Son. What if I say He gave us Himself? That is also true, for there is such a mysterious unity between the Father and the Son that, in giving the Son, the Father gave us Himself. Oh, listen, then, you who are lost in sin, and seem to be helpless! Must there not be hope for you when such a gift as this is given? Not simply, mark you, a gift of grace, or a gift of love, or a gift of power, but the gift of the Godhead's own self, the gift of all there is in Him of whom we read, It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell." "Behold," says the Father, "I have given HIM."

When Isaiah wrote those words, they could not be read quite as clearly as you and I can read them, for now, holding up this Scripture to the light of the cross, and reading it by the lamps of those five wounds, I can see a marvelous meaning in it, "I have given him." Yes, the Father has given a redemption for the bond-slave. He has given a sacrifice for the guilty. He has given His Son.

The words in which I speak of this great fact are very simple and they may seem very poverty-stricken, but the truth itself is such as made the angels stand in amazement. All heaven was bewildered with wonder that God, the Infinite, should give His Son for poor, sinful, dying worms like ourselves. It seemed too much to give—the infinitely-holy God to die for guilty sinners, the everlasting and eternal Son of God to suffer that His feeble, finite creatures might not perish.

And if it be a wonder that God the Father should give His Son, it is an equal wonder that *the Son consented to be given*. The Father said, "I have given him," yet it is equally true of the Son, "He loved me, and gave himself for me." The Father's gift was no violation of the will of the Son, but the Son said, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." Oh, to think that Jesus should give Himself for you and for me! To take our nature, to descend from heaven to the manger, was a great stoop, but to take our sin, to come down from the throne of glory to the cross of Calvary, was a still greater proof of His condescending love.

Oh, think of this, beloved! He so completely gave Himself that He gave to us His Deity and His humanity, His soul and His body, His life and His death, and though He is now risen from the dead, He still gives Himself to us, for He has never recalled the gift He once bestowed. And this is the very glory of His gift that He is still ours by a constant gift of Himself to us. Clutch at this blessed truth, you despairing ones! God has given His Son and the Son has given Himself, and if, by an act of faith, you trust Him, He is at once yours, and He is yours forever. What more can you possibly want?

In this fourth verse, we have also *the purposes of this gift avowed*. "I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people." First, Christ is given for a *Witness*. What does that mean?

Surely, Christ is given, first, to show us what God is. If you want to know what God is, study the life of Christ, for Jesus said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." In Christ, the Godhead shines as it were through a merciful medium, so that the excessive glory of the Deity is toned down to meet the weakness of our poor minds, lest we should be blinded by the ineffable splendor. God in human flesh is a witness to human flesh of what God is.

Next, Christ is a Witness in this sense—that He bears His testimony to us concerning the Father's will, the Father's love, and the Father's grace. He declares what He has seen in secret of the Father's

purposes of mercy, so that what He testifies, He speaks not of Himself, but what He has seen with the Father, that He declares unto us. He is the Witness of what God is and of what God has done for us.

His name is put to the everlasting covenant in many ways—as the Surety of it, and as a Partner in it, but also as a Witness to it. He bears witness to us that, in His person, God has entered into covenant with men, saying to them, “Inasmuch as you have broken the first covenant of works and now cannot possibly keep it, I have made another and a better covenant. Christ has undertaken to magnify My law and to satisfy My justice, and I have undertaken to save all those whom I have given to Him.” And Jesus bears witness that it is so. He is Himself the pledge and seal of the covenant.

I am so glad that I have not to talk with an invisible, impalpable God, who has never been seen of man. It seems too much for one, veiled in human flesh, to be able to speak with the unseen JEHOVAH, the God who is a Spirit, but I can speak to the man, Christ Jesus. I feel now that I have Mediator, one of a thousand who can lay His hand upon both parties to the covenant because He belongs to both of us, and is both God and man. My heart rejoices as I behold God in human flesh, the witness for God to the people.

O poor sinners, be glad, be glad. God has given His dear Son to bear witness to you that He wills that you should be saved, that He is able to save you without a violation of His justice, that He is willing to save you, and willing to save you now, if you will but trust His Son!

Our text also tells us that the Father gives Christ, not only as a Witness, but as a *Leader and a Commander*. That is just what we want. Men in any country where they are greatly oppressed, sigh for a leader. “Grant a leader bold and brave,” is the prayer that has gone up from many a down-trodden nation.

Well, the Lord has appointed His Son to be a Leader and a Commander, and if we will but yield to Him, to be led by Him, to be commanded by Him, He will lead us safely, He will lead us on to victory and to conquest, and heaven itself shall be ours in due time. He who puts himself under this Leader shall go forth conquering and to conquer. He shall war against his sin and win the day. He shall fight against the devil and overcome him by the blood of the Lamb. He shall do battle with death itself, and be more than a conqueror over the last enemy.

I would to God that as I speak some of you would say, “Christ is given as a Leader and a Commander, therefore we will enlist beneath His banner. Henceforth, the Son of David, the Son of God, shall be both Leader and Commander to us.” Happy, happy, happy day for you and for all of whom that shall be true!

Now notice who are *the persons thus favored*. To whom is the Lord Jesus given as a Witness and a Leader and Commander? Twice we are told that it is to the people, “A witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.” I have known some people sneer at “the common people.” Ah, yes, but it was the common people who heard Christ gladly, and it is for the people that He died! “I,” says God, “have exalted one chosen out of the people.” The Lord Jesus Christ is the Christ of common people. If any of you are so high and mighty that you must go to heaven fashionably, you will be lost. The unfashionable way to heaven, by trusting in Jesus Christ, is the only way that will take you there. He is the people’s Witness, the people’s Leader, the people’s Commander.

That means, does it not, that He is the Leader and Commander of a great host, not merely of a select few? Perhaps you have read about us poor Calvinists, what a wretched, miserable sect we are, how we are always trying to keep salvation to ourselves and how we believe that only a very few will ever be saved! Put all that down among the lies that our enemies tell about us. It is not true and it never was true, for there are no people under heaven who are more anxious that all men should be saved than are we who believe that, nevertheless, the Lord has a people whom He will save.

Our hearts, we trust, are full of love to men, despite all that is said about us. It is my hope that the Lord Jesus Christ will save so many, that at the last, those who are lost will bear no greater proportion to the whole mass of mankind than do the persons in prison to the multitudes that are outside of it in any well-ordered state.

“There will have to be a great change,” says somebody, “to bring that about.” Yes, there will be a great change. There are glorious times yet coming, notwithstanding all that tends to the contrary. There is a day to dawn when the Lord Jesus shall be owned as King of Kings and Lord of Lords and “He shall reign for ever and ever,” and the overwhelming multitudes of His redeemed shall prove that He is not the Witness and Leader and Commander to a miserable few, a mere handful, but that He is Witness and Leader and Commander to the people. In all things He shall have the pre-eminence.

“To the people.” Then, surely, that means all sorts of people? It does. Our Lord is a Leader and Commander to all classes and conditions of men. Kings may follow Him if they will. And peasants and paupers do follow Him in great multitudes. He is willing to receive the lost and the low, the poorest of the poor. He is willing to uplift the most sunken. “Whosoever will,” says He, “let him take the water of life freely.”

He is a Leader and a Commander to the people. Then follow Him, my friend, obey Him. You never thought of doing so before, but may God’s grace move you to say, “If He is a Leader and Commander to the people, I am one of them, and I will go with Him. He shall be my Leader and my Commander.” If it be really so with you, glory shall be yours. Christ will bring you to glory and you shall bring glory to His name forever and ever as you bless and praise Him who has saved you by His grace.

So much, then, upon the divine gift, God has given His own Son to be a Savior to men, and Christ has given Himself to be a Witness, and Leader, and Commander. Oh, that none of us may refuse Him, but may all accept Him as God’s gift to us!

II. The second thing in our text is A DIVINE PROMISE made to this Leader and Commander.

It is, first, a promise *to call those whom He does not know*. “Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not.” That must be a strange nation, must it not, which Christ does not know? There will be people at the last to whom Christ will say, “I never knew you.” And there are such people now, whom Christ has never known in this sense. He never spoke with them, He never heard their voice in prayer, He never heard their hearts cry to Him, He never had anything to do with them. He never knew them by mutual acquaintance. And there are nations of this kind of people.

I might almost say that there is a nation of this sort in London whom Christ does not know, millions with whom He has had no dealings at all. They never come near His courts, they do not recognize His day, they scarcely even know His name. What a promise this is to Christ, “Thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not”! The people are so far sunk in sin that it seems as if Christ Himself never knew them.

Did you ever cross the threshold of a house—or if not of a whole house, perhaps of one room—where there was a number of persons herded together in poverty and misery? Drunkenness was there, vice was there, filth was there. Perhaps you were the first visitor who ever went there upon an errand of mercy and you said to yourself, “What a dreadful place this is! Surely, the blessed Savior has never been here, there is no trace of His footprints here.”

I do think it is a most blessed thing that the Father should say to Christ, “Thou shalt call this sort of people.” Such degraded and sinful men and women as these are yet to be called and yet to be saved. Oh, be of good courage, you who try to labor in the very worst parts of London—or for the matter of that, in the worst parts of Africa, or wherever you may go! The people may seem to be so far gone in sin and degradation that even the great Lover of souls does not know them, yet the promise is that He shall call them—and call them effectually, and they shall come unto Him.

The next part of the promise declares that Christ is to *make run those who do not know Him*, “and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee.” People who did not know anything about Christ, and who did not want to know about Him, shall, on a sudden, hear of Him, and they shall run to Him. I have often noticed that, when such people do come to Christ, they always run to Him.

I hope that some of you who have been hearing me for many years, will yet come to Christ though you have long stayed away from Him. But if you do, it will be with you pretty much as it was with the snail that got into the ark. I think he must have started very early to be able to get in before the door was

shut, for he traveled so slowly. And you hearers of the Gospel who have grown accustomed to it, are as slow in coming to Christ as some boys are when they are going to school.

But when a man has never heard the Gospel and at last somebody has induced him to come in, and sit in the aisle, or in a back seat, it is all so new to him that he begins talking to himself about it. "Christ died for the guilty? I have only to trust Him, and my sins shall be pardoned, and I shall be saved?" He jumps at the idea. It is the very thing he wants and he grasps it at once. He is saved in a moment and he rejoices with a joy unspeakable in the Christ whom he has found in the space of half-an-hour, while others have for years been hearing in vain the glad tidings of salvation. "Nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee."

Do you notice how God talks here? He speaks like a God. Who is this that says, "They *shall*"? Someone asks. "Man has a free will, has he not?" Yes, and God has a free will, too, and when these two come into conflict, it is God's free will that wins the day. Man will do what God wills that man shall do, the will of the Eternal shall get the victory over the poor transient human will.

When I come to preach in this pulpit, I do not say to myself, "Perhaps somebody will make himself willing to be saved." No, but I think to myself, "I shall have a picked congregation to listen to my Master's message. The Lord will pick them out and bring the right people to hear His Word and when I preach it, His Word shall not return unto Him void. Those whom He has determined to bless shall be blessed, whatever the devil may try to do to the contrary. God will have His way, and storm their hearts, and carry all before Him."

"Well, but," asks someone, "you do believe in man's free will?" Yes, I do, as much as you do and perhaps more. But I also believe in God's eternal purpose and in God's all-conquering will, so that, without violating the will of man, He can still have His own way, and He can make this promise true to Christ, "Nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God."

Now, lastly on this point, here is a divine promise *to exert an amazing motive power*. What is it that makes people run to Christ? The text tells us, "Nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee." A glorified Christ makes men run to Him. When Christ is glorified in your hearts, dear friends, you will run to Him. The Son of God, to whom you have been an enemy, nevertheless, out of mighty love, came here, lived, and labored, and died, giving His whole life away that the ungodly might be saved through Him. Not to gain anything for Himself, but out of sheer pity and abounding love, He passed under His Father's rod. He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood. He suffered anguish even unto death for men's redemption. And it was the Son of God who did this—God over all blessed forever.

Having died, He was buried, He rose again, and now all power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." He can save the drunk, the swearer, the profligate, the eighty year-old sinner steeped up to his neck in filthiness and vice. He is able, with a word, to deliver the most corrupt from the power of sin. He can make the most abandoned pure, and chaste, and clean. Through His precious blood, He can save them from all the guilt of their sin, and all the power of their sin, and all the penalty of their sin. Ay, and ultimately, from the very existence of their sin, so that even those who were all black from head to foot shall be "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

Oh, that the Holy Spirit would, with one glorious ray, light up the cross till you could all see it! Oh, for one beam of light to let the sin-bitten see the brazen serpent lifted high! There is life in a look at Christ.

O friends, I wish that you would all believe this as I say it, for I would say it not only with my lips, but with my heart! It is the best news that mortals did ever tell. Yea, even angels from their glory never descended to earth with a message so sweet as this—Christ is lifted high to be a great Savior of great sinners. Help is laid upon One who is mighty. He sits upon the throne above that He may reign over sinners. He holds the scepter of all worlds that He may stretch it out in mercy towards the guiltiest of the guilty. Only trust Him, fall at His feet in penitence, confess your transgression, ask to be delivered from

it, for this is God's promise to His Son, that you and such as you shall come to Him, and coming to Him, shall be drawn by the fact that He is such a glorious Christ, so every way adapted to your need. God give us grace to rightly set forth a glorified Christ, then shall we soon have saved sinners who have been made to run to Him!

III. And now, finally, the last verse of the text furnishes A DIVINE EXHORTATION. "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near."

Notice the connection between verses five and six, "Nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee." There is the absolute, unconditional promise. And then the very next verse says, "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found." There is the unlimited exhortation to men, so that *an exhortation to men is not inconsistent with the strongest doctrine of grace*, Yea, more, *the decree of God in no sense renders the effort of man unnecessary*. "Nations shall run unto thee," says the Father to His Son. And when He has said that, He turns round to the nations and He says to them, "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near."

Salvation is free and it is the gift of God's grace, but oh, my hearer, you must seek it, you must call upon God for it, and I would, in God's name, stir you up to seek Him and call upon him now! Ere you go to your bed, seek Him who is ready to be found, call upon him who is waiting to hear.

Notice that there is put here *a plea of a very encouraging kind*, "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found," that is the Gospel day. "Call you upon him while he is near," that is mercy's day. I believe that in such a congregation as this, when the Gospel is being earnestly preached, there is a kind of propitious interval allowed to men. There is in grace, as well as in the matter of making a fortune, a "tide" which must be "taken at the flood," and I think that there is a flood-tide just now for some of you. Listen to the music of the waters, "He may be found."

It is not true that Christ has gone away and shut the door of mercy, "He may be found." "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him." He is not far off, He has not gone away, shut the door behind Him and declared that He will never hear prayer again, "Call ye upon him while he is near." He is very near you just now. He is pleading with you. He has been blessing your neighbor. He has, by His grace, called one who sits in the same pew with you. "Call ye upon him while he is near."

There is also *a warning*, as well as an encouragement, in these words, "While he is near." While mercy's sun has not yet set, while yet the twelve hours of the day are not all counted out—I mean, the day of the Lord's long-suffering mercy, seek Him, I pray you, for there is a day coming when you shall seek in vain, when you shall knock in vain, when once the Master of the house has risen up, and shut the door. That is clearly implied in our text, "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found." There will come a time when He cannot be found—I do not believe such a time is ever reached in this life, or if so, very rarely—but this life is very frail and may end at any moment. Therefore, while it lasts, seek the Lord. For when this life is once over, you can never find Him.

I, at least, will have no complicity in that atrocious treason against God's Word which leads men to believe that they may perhaps seek and find Him in another state. I believe that, of all falsehoods that were ever preached this is the most dangerous, and likely to do the most hurt to men's souls. It is very popular, I know, but what do I care about that? God's servant is not to preach smooth things, but true things. It is this which we have to preach and we dare not go an inch beyond it, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not"—shall have another chance in a future state? Not so said the lips of perfect love and mercy, the lips of Christ Himself. He said, "Go you into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not *shall be damned*."

There it stands in His Word and there is nothing after it. There is no hope—smaller or "larger"—offered to any man who believes not in the Lord Jesus Christ. Reject the Son of God and what hope can there be for you? "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" God Incarnate bleeds and dies, and yet you will not be saved by Him, then what can become of you? What must await you but "a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation"? He who will not have God Himself to

save him has deliberately committed spiritual suicide, and on his own head must be his blood. Therefore, I pray you, heed the message of the text, “Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.”

Make sure work of it and do it at once. Trust Jesus. Trust Him wholly. Trust Him fully. Leave your sin, leave your self-righteousness, quit it all. Give yourself up to Christ to be made holy, to be taught to do His will, and to be His servant all your days. Then, blessed be His name, He will save you, for God gave Him on purpose that He might do so, and He will, and the will of the Lord shall be done in you. Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

ISAIAH 53 AND 55:1-7

Isaiah 53. Verse 1. *Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?*

It is no new thing for Gospel ministers to be disappointed. Even Isaiah, the most evangelical of all the prophets, who might well be placed at the head of the College of Preachers, feels compelled to say, in the name of all that sacred brotherhood, “Who hath believed our report?” The report was a very plain one, a very earnest one, and very full of noble matter. Men ought to have believed it, but they did not, and they never will unless God’s arm is revealed, for faith is the product of omnipotence, and men never believe in Christ till God stretches out His arm. Where was the difficulty of believing the report about Christ? Isaiah tells us about Him, and as we listen, we understand why so many believe not on Him.

2. *For he shall grow up before him—*

That is, the Messiah shall grow up before God—

2. *As a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.*

When Christ came, He was very lovely to those who could judge of spiritual beauty. In form and comeliness, He was unrivalled, but not to carnal men. They said, “Where is His royal splendor? Where is the majesty of His kingdom?” As they looked upon the carpenter’s Son, they said, “Where are His riches?” They heard Him say that He had no where to lay His head and they despised such a Messiah. As He spoke in simple parables to the people, they asked, “Where is His wisdom?” So, to carnal eyes, the Savior had “no form nor comeliness.”

3. *He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

Oh, how sad it is that the Son of the Most High God, when He condescended to wear our nature, received such base treatment as this from the hands of men! How equally sad is it that His glorious and ever-blessed Gospel should still be the object of contempt to multitudes of men! They will not have it. They will have their own philosophy—their own falsehoods, rather let us say—but Christ they despise and they esteem not His Gospel.

4. *Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows:—*

Listen, you sad ones, you sorrowful ones! Let this sweet note charm you into joy, “He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.”

4. *Yet we—*

We, for whom He was the Substitute, for whom He smarted, “Yet we”—

4-5. *Did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.*

Wonderful medicine! Marvelous healing! Where shall we find the like? The Physician drinks the bitter draught and so cures the patient. Who ever heard of such a wonder as this? The Physician is put to death and that great sacrifice heals the patient. Who ever heard of such a thing as this before? The whole

Gospel in a nutshell lies in this verse, “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”

Now comes another wonderful verse, such as Luther was accustomed to call “a little Bible.” It begins with “all” and it ends with “all.”

6. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

There is your only hope of eternal life, sinner. You are among the “all” who went astray. If you are a believer in Christ, you will be found among the “all” whose iniquities were laid upon Him and carried away by Him.

7. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

Oh, the majesty of His silence! Never was eloquence equal to this, “He opened not his mouth.”

8. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

They ought to have been stricken, their transgressions deserved the heavy blows of the rod of God’s wrath. Yet, “for the transgression of my people was he stricken.”

9. And he made his grave with the wicked,—

He was crucified between two malefactors.

9. And with the rich in His death;—

He was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

9. Because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

For that very reason He was qualified to bear our sin. Because He had no sin of His own, therefore He could bear ours, and He did bear ours, and died, “the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.”

10. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

Do not be afraid, then, about the kingdom of Christ. Its interests are safe enough, for they are in His hands, and God has given the promise that His pleasure shall prosper there.

11. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied:

His death-pangs were our birth-pangs and Christ shall see that which is born of His soul-anguish, and “shall be satisfied.”

11. By his knowledge—

Or, “by the knowledge of him.”

11. Shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

There is no meaning at all in this chapter if it does not teach that Christ took upon Himself the sin of His people and did suffer in their room and place and stead. Let who will object to this doctrine, it is the Gospel, the very heart and marrow of it, and there is nothing that can make a heavy heart glad until it sees sin removed by the death of Christ. “He shall bear their iniquities.”

12. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death:

He not only died, but He poured out His very soul unto death.

12. and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

We shall do well also to read part of the 55th chapter of Isaiah after this 53rd, the one is an admirable preparation for the other

Isaiah 55. Verse 1. *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters,—*

To the waters which flowed from that smitten Rock of which we have been reading.

1-3. *and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me:*

See, the way of salvation is through Ear-Gate? We must hear the Gospel, for it is not what we are to do, but what we are to receive that will save us. And we must come to God to hear it before we can receive it. “Faith cometh by hearing.” Give a very earnest ear, then, to the preaching of the Gospel of Christ. “Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” Again the Lord says, “Incline your ear, and come unto me.”

3. *Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.*

Says someone, “I can understand God making a covenant with David, but will He make a covenant with me?” Yes, and after the same sure tenor, too, “I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.” God will promise to bless you, and save you, and keep you, and present you in the glory in the day of Christ’s appearing. And this shall be a covenant which shall never be broken. Though all things else are changed, yet that covenant shall stand secure forever. It will fill you with joy when you understand that such a covenant as this is made with you and you will say, as David did, “Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure.” Oh, what a blessing it is to have a share in this covenant!

4. *Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.*

“I have given him,” that is, David’s greater Son, the true David, “I have him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.”

5. *Behold, thou,—*

That is, Jesus, the Son of David: “Behold, thou,—

5-7. *Shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee. Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

Oh, that many may put this blessed promise to the proof even now, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—199, 554, 660

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